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ABSTRACT

Most disadvantaged children have multiple needs that require a comprehensive, integrated approach to service delivery. A recent study of the conditions of children reported the following changes since 1969 that warrant a reassessment of service delivery: (1) the number of children living in poverty has increased; (2) family structure and working patterns have shifted dramatically; and (3) the number of minority group children has increased relative to the majority population. These changes require a revamping of the present inefficient and ineffective delivery system that is unable to meet the multiple needs of disadvantaged children. The following examples of promising short-term solutions are described: (1) Ventura and San Bernardino Counties (California) interagency network; (2) the Minneapolis Youth Coordinating Board (Minnesota); and (3) the Ounce of Prevention Fund, which supports a statewide system in Illinois. A long-term solution might be found by using schools as a structural "hub" for organizing and brokering an effective, integrated system of service delivery. The following examples of partially successful state interventions are described: (1) state commissions; (2) legislative committees; (3) consolidated budgets; (4) children's codes; (5) traditional programs; (6) interagency cooperation; (7) legislative mandates; and (8) task forces. Positive political momentum to improve federal and state systems has been hampered by federal budget deficits and slower state revenue growth. This situation could be improved by federal incentive grants for state and local initiatives and selective state deregulation when localities demonstrate effective services integration plans. Statistical data are presented in a graph. (FMW)

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Improving Policies for Children

Proceedings of the 1989 New York Education Policy Seminar

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Improving Policies for Children

Proceedings of the 1989 New York Education Policy Seminar

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Preface

This publication is one of a series published by the School of Education and the Nelson A. Rockefeller Institute of Government. The paper was first presented at a School of Education/Rockefeller Institute Education Policy Seminar. The Seminar and this publication, in particular, are intended to reflect the fundamental connection that professional schools must have between the world of ideas and discovery and the interaction between the world of problems to be solved.

Excellence in research encompasses many different kinds of activity and serves many different purposes. The School of Education is committed to research that advances the power of the individual disciplines to explain, predict, and define new problems while fostering critical resistance to exaggerated or particular claims on their behalf. The goal is to create new knowledge while also preserving and exploring the complexities of the field.

The liveliness and creativity of research depends on the long-standing tension between the urge to advance disciplinary claims as far and as rigorously as possible, and the contrary urge to subject these claims to critical scrutiny among a variety of interdisciplinary considerations. For this reason the School of Education has carefully fostered the tradition of interdisciplinary research that is responsive to the needs of both scholars and practitioners.

It is at the intersection of the disciplines and at the junction of problems of practice that schools of education must stake their reputation. In this context the objectives for the Education Policy Seminar are:

a. To provide a bridge between education as a field of study and the social and behavioral disciplines;

b. To provide an opportunity for policy makers to analyze educational problems through the lens of one or more of the social and/or behavioral disciplines; and

c. To provide a forum where the traditions of scholarly research in the pursuit of new knowledge and fuller understanding are focused on the task of enhancing the quality of life through education.

The format of each seminar includes the presentation of a paper by a leading scholar from an academic discipline. The author is charged with examining the field of education through the lens of his or her discipline for the purpose of trying to both inform and improve educational practice. The proceedings are edited by a member of the School of Education faculty. These proceedings were edited by Professor Anthony Cresswell.

As mentioned previously, the Education Policy Seminar is offered in cooperation with the Nelson A. Rockefeller Institute of Government, State University of New York. In this regard,

we are particularly indebted to Richard Nathan, Director of the Institute, for his interest, cooperation, and generous support of the Seminar and publication of the proceedings.

Finally, we trust the reader will find this publication stimulating and we invite and welcome comments.

Robert H. Koff
Dean

Improving Policies for Children

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America's children and youth[1] and their educational prospects are profoundly affected by the context of their lives and their relative location in the larger society. Among the related set of elements that shape children's experiences one can include the level of family income, parental[2] employment, family structure, racial and ethnic background, health care, the availability of alcohol or other substances, and family support systems such as child care or mental health services.

In recent years substantial changes in these components have redefined the contours of childhood. While the majority of U.S. children are better off, a growing number of children have come to experience poverty and often other incidental[3] risks. These risks are cumulative, including poor physical health, lower academic achievement, and lower self-reports of happiness. In addition to the growing number of children in poverty, more and more children from single parent families and minority and limited-English-proficient backgrounds are entering the public schools. At the same time many of the income support and other programs that serve children and youth have experienced declining or limited resources. Aid to Families with Dependent Children and other such programs do not cover the eligible population. Increasingly, schools must meet the needs of children and youth from backgrounds and experiences they were not set up to serve and have historically not served well.

Educational leaders, especially school administrators, need a better grasp of the educational implications of the everyday lives of children, and a new strategy for bringing together the various public and private organizations to help. The current fragmentation across children's services represents a fundamental failure to confront the comprehensive needs of children, youth, and adults. Essentially, it has neglected to begin with the simple, provocative question: What is it like to be a child who needs help? The current top-down policy approach operates from the organizational perspective of the multiple service providers. This paper outlines the changing conditions and needs of children to form a basis for analyzing the effectiveness of the current services delivered to them. We then move to the conditions of the services as they presently exist, and to prescriptions for improving and reconceptualizing policies and administrative approaches. Finally, the role of the schools and state government in this new conceptualization is examined.

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* The writers acknowledge the editorial assistance of Carolyn Kelley of Stanford University.

Analyzing the Conditions of Children as a Prelude to a New Policy

The context of children's lives has undergone considerable change in the last few decades. Since 1969 an expanding cohort of children have come to experience poverty,[4] a condition that increases the likelihood of health and academic risks; furthermore, economic status is the single-most predictor of adult self-sufficiency.[5] Family structure has also shifted dramatically, with the notion of two biological parents—one working outside and the other inside the home—operational in a diminishing proportion of families. The numbers of children from racial and ethnic minority backgrounds have increased relative to the majority population, greatly so in some states and locales.

To explore these changes and their consequences, Policy Analysis for California Education (PACE) recently sponsored a major report on the conditions of children and youth. In the following section we use the aggregate national statistics drawn from the PACE report and others to examine these conditions. Although any particular element may vary considerably by region and state, these numbers provide a fairly accurate portrait of the general trends.

Poverty. Today nearly 20 percent of children in the nation live in poverty, up from 14 percent in 1969.[6] The median income of families in the bottom income quintile (20 percent) has eroded over time from $9,796[7] in 1977 to $8,919 in 1986, and the gap between the incomes of the poorest and wealthiest families has grown. The decline in real income to those in the lower quintile has been accompanied by gains for those in the top 40 percent of income. Race and ethnicity, gender, and family structure is strongly associated with the likelihood of poverty. In California, for example, 27 percent of Asian, 32 percent of black, and 34 percent of Hispanic children were poor in 1985-86, in contrast to 10 percent of all white children.[8] In 1984, half of the single women with children lived in poverty, compared to 11.4 percent of two-parent families.[9]

While many children fare well in households with low income, studies have shown that these children are more likely to die in infancy and early childhood,[10] suffer serious illness,[11] become pregnant during teen years, or drop out of school,[12] and are less likely to continue education beyond high school.[13] Despite statistical associations of these outcomes with poverty, the direction of causality is less clear.[14] The life chances may be linked to the lack of access to adequate health care and nutrition, the often lower quality of schooling in poorer neighborhoods, the stress of poverty on family relationships, or other elements.

Family Structure. Most institutions that serve children and youth are structured on the assumption that children live with two biological parents, one working in the home and the other in the formal labor market. This traditional type now comprises only a small proportion of families—less than a third. Forty-six percent of children live in homes where both parents, or the only parent, are working.[15] Because of an increase in divorce and a rise in the number of births to single mothers,[16] about one-half of all children and youth will live in a single-parent family for some period of their lives.[17] However, at any particular point in time 75 percent live in two-parent families, including stepparents.[18] Nationally, about one-tenth of families have a stepparent present. The proportions living in single-parent families vary substantially by race and ethnic group: In 1985, roughly 10 percent of Asian, 12 percent of

white children, 24 percent of Hispanic, and 52 percent of black children lived in these family settings.[19]

Family structure is a good predictor of children's economic well-being, with single mothers disproportionately represented in poverty statistics. The hourly wages of single mothers are lower than those of other women (whose wages are generally more than one-third less than men), and although the majority of these women work, many depend on public assistance. Child-support payments are notoriously meager or nonexistent for most primary caregivers. In 1985 only half of all custodial mothers had court-ordered support decrees for financial assistance, and most received less than 50 percent of the payments stipulated. For mothers with income below the poverty level, the situation was worse. Only 40 percent obtained support decrees from the courts, and one-third of these actually received nothing.[20]

The way family structures develop has consequences for children. When single-parent families occur as a result of divorce, the consequences, at least in the short-term, may be negative for children's emotional well-being. A study of 7- to 11 -year olds found children of divorce twice as likely to use mental health services as other children the same age. Children of divorce are more likely to become substance abusers, marry as teenagers, become sexually active at an earlier age, and become pregnant more often. Single parenthood, whether as a result of divorce or otherwise, is often a stressful situation for the parent, and one which may have consequences for the child-parent relationship. In addition, children of single mothers who have never been married tend to be even poorer, more dependent on welfare, and living in poor housing.[21]

Work. In recent decades, both female and teenage work behavior has changed dramatically. While working mothers from poor families was not uncommon in the past, women from middle- and upper-income families have come to join them. Economic pressures have made the option of becoming a full-time homemaker almost obsolete for the majority of women and men.

As of 1987, over half of all mothers with children under six and nearly 70 percent of mothers with children aged 6 to 17 were seeking employment or worked in the formal labor market outside the home.[22] As with other indicators reported here, this varies by race and ethnic origin. Forty-two percent of white and 51.4 percent of black mothers of children under six worked.[23] The consequence of changing work patterns is a high (and unmet) demand for affordable quality child care and after-school care.

Teenagers, too, are working in the formal labor market in large numbers. In 1985, almost 62 percent of all 16- to 19-year olds worked during some part of the year. At least one-third of all high school students hold part-time jobs in any given week, with 75 percent of seniors working an average 16 to 20 hours weekly.[24] The majority of this income is used to buy clothes, food, and personal items. The evidence on the effect of work on teenagers is not clear. Some studies have found that working detracts from school work and was associated with dropping out. But other research and program evaluations suggest that work can provide positive models and can lead to improved academic performance.[25]

Health. In general terms, progress has been made on a number of fronts concerning children's health. In California, for example, 97 percent of kindergartners have received

adequate immunizations for measles, rubella, and mumps. Death rates from communicable diseases such as tuberculosis and pneumonia have fallen by a hundredfold in the past 50 years as a result of antibiotics, sanitation, and other advances. Fewer than 10 percent of California's children are considered to have serious health problems and/or chronic disabilities that limit their activities.

However, the conditions of poverty (not surprisingly) lead to disproportionate amounts of health problems. As mentioned, the morbidity rates of these children are higher than the rest of the young population, and they are more likely to suffer serious illness. A relative lack of prenatal care for women in poverty leads to low birth-weight children, a condition which often predicts persistent health problems. In California, children in poverty in 1984-85 spent twice as many days in the hospital as other children. The two-to-one ratio also held true between minority and white children. In addition, blacks, Hispanics, and other minorities are less likely to have health insurance than white non-Hispanics, especially in the "near poor" category where family incomes are too high to qualify for Medicaid but low enough to make private health insurance a serious financial burden.[26]

The major health problems for adolescents result from things they do to themselves or each other. They show a disturbing trend in deaths from suicide, murder, and preventable accidents. In addition, 5 percent use illicit drugs, 20 percent smoke cigarettes, and 35 percent regularly use alcohol.[27] Physicians estimate that over 15 percent of the children born in big-city California public hospitals had drug- or alcohol-addicted mothers.

In sum, the overall condition of children as indicated by income, family structure and background, health, and other measures has changed considerably in the last few years. We are more aware of the multiple and interrelated problems of many at-risk children. These changes warrant a reassessment of the delivery of services to children and a reconsideration of the appropriate role of the school.

Politics of Government Programs for Disadvantaged Children

Significant political advances for disadvantaged children depend primarily upon trends and upheavals in the economy and major social or political movements. The depression of the 1930s galvanized huge federal efforts to relieve the suffering of the poor. The civil rights movement's success in the 1960s was a crucial event that created a climate of opinion favorable for government programs targeted at disadvantaged children. Recent changes in job requirements and the labor force stimulates new concern for the productive potential of disadvantaged children. This may translate into government interventions designed to upgrade the skills of those who do not meet the minimum threshold for employment skills in a rapidly changing economy.

It is doubtful that increased government programs will be justified by societal concern for the plight of children trapped in a cycle of poverty. Large-scale U.S. government programs are rarely based on a public concern for children, but rather on a more instrumental goal. Grubb and Lazerson build a strong case that future government programs for the disadvantaged will rarely amount to more than incrementalism.[28] Government children's programs are

designed to make up for parental failure because the U.S. believes children are basically a private responsibility. Major government responsibility should be based primarily on such overwhelming evidence of family disorganization and collapse that justifies the government removing the child from the parents through foster care or incarceration (termed *parens patriae*). This leaves out children of the working poor or near poor whose school performance is at the bare minimum. The assumption that the state is responsible for deficient and neglected children of undeserving parents makes it difficult to provide generous public benefits.

> In Aid to Families with Dependent Children, the basic income support program designed for children, the antipathy to 'welfare queens,' deserting fathers, and 'welfare bums'—the parents who are considered undeserving—has consistently emerged as hostility to funding welfare programs that would support those parents, but this hostility has unavoidably hurt poor children. Because the ability of the state to stand in *loco parentis* and to break the link between parent and child has necessarily been incomplete, children in public programs have always suffered for the deficiencies attributed to their parents.
>
> . . . Yet we invest reluctantly in those [government] programs, clinging to a desperate wish that parents would adequately fulfill their private responsibilities and resenting their children for making demands on our private incomes.[29]

Does the U.S. have any "public love" for children or must government commitments be based on a calculus of economic costs and benefits with a high return on public investment? A review of the justifications for expanded government programs suggests that "the solvency of the state is the goal that justifies the effort to transform a potential 'liability' into an asset, an independent taxpayer."[30] Yet even if children are most often valued in public programs not for the individuals they are, but as instruments for achieving other goals, the politics of the 1990s might be favorable for government initiatives.

The instrumental goals most often mentioned stem in part from the declining birthrates of well-off children and the rapid growth of low-income children. This is leading to business concern about an adequate supply of educated labor as employers must turn to disadvantaged children for vacant positions. The present stress on quality education for minorities and the poor stems less from a recognition of a moral imperative, and more from a pragmatic calculation of our national self-interest than in the 1960s. Corporate and political leaders are acutely aware that the high school-age population is smaller and, further, that a large and fast-growing proportion consists of students disadvantaged by economic and social conditions well beyond their control. Concerned about the supply of skilled workers needed to maintain and increase the productivity and international competitiveness of the American economy, private sector executives and governmental officials are pressing the schools to cultivate the academic potential of each youngster. Moreover, the twin notions that the majority of students from poor and minority backgrounds are destined to fail, and that schools do not make a difference, have largely been abandoned.

Another widespread concern is who will pay for the social security benefits of the current baby boom generation in its 40s. There is a curious reverse dependency model of the old relying on a productive youth. Moreover, costs of government welfare programs will increase in the 1990s if nothing is done to better educate the growing percentage of disadvantaged in our society. Consequently, despite the pessimism of authors like Grubb, children may fare better in the next decade than they have in the last one. Although federal programs have been cut

and have a very limited future, state and local governments have financed a robust growth in education expenditures from 1983 to 1987.[31] The needs of a growing capitalist economy may coincide with the needs of disadvantaged children to have better health, education, and happy lives.

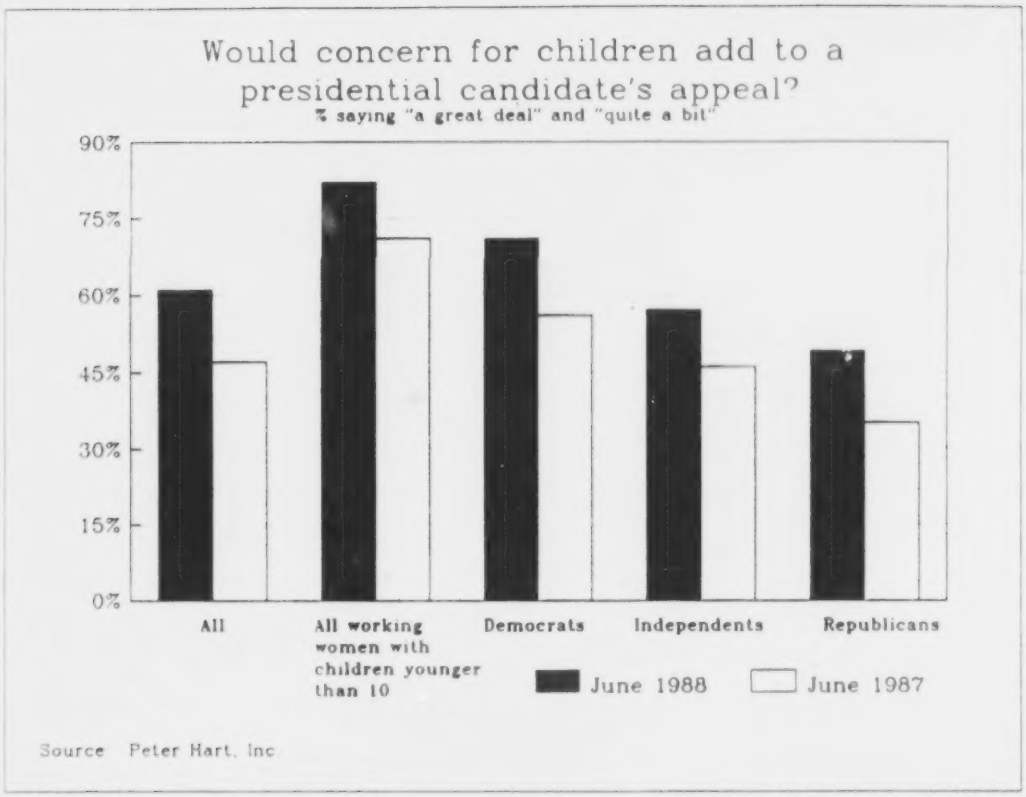
The 1960's government interventions were based largely on the moral imperative to win a war on poverty and overcome centuries of racial discrimination. These programs peaked when the nation's moral concern turned to the Vietnam War. A remnant of children's advocates left over from the 1960s pursued legal and legislative tactics that brought some crucial but incremental gains such as government aid for handicapped children in the 1970s. Legal gains increased in the 1980s when the Civil Rights Act was revised after the *Grove City* decision. Such plans were subdued, however, by the tax cutting fever of the late 1970s, and the major shift to defense expenditures under the Reagan Administration. The federal budget deficit implies more activity at the state level, but here as well, the responsibilities of government for disadvantaged children are unclear. Grubb and Lazerson argue:

> The limits of *parens patriae* and instrumental concepts of children are the two most striking constraints on the fulfillment of our benevolent concern for the young. But public responsibility has also been corrupted by a lingering adherence to the ideology of parental determinism, the notion that parents alone determine the futures of their children. We continue to assert that parents raise their children privately and are wholly responsible for their successes and failures, despite the ubiquity of social institutions and public decision in the lives of children.[32]

The legal theory supporting parental determinism reached its high water mark in *J.R.* v. *Parham* (mid-1970s), where the U.S. Supreme Court concluded that parents virtually always act in the best interest of their children.

By the mid-1980s, however, public opinion polls registered dramatic increases in public concern about the condition of children, and a willingness to cut defense outlays to support children's programs. During the 1988 election campaign, political pollsters for presidential candidate George Bush, worried about a gender gap, found he did very poorly with married working women.[33] Bush proposed an expanded children's agenda beyond the Reagan Administration's base, including an earned income tax credit. Legislation with an even broader children's agenda has recently passed in both houses of Congress, including a large child care program.[34] During the campaign, Dukakis endorsed a $2.5 billion child-care bill that would have supported middle- and lower-class children. In short, children's issues have become good politics both for business needs to employ disadvantaged workers during a labor shortage, and the needs of women at all income levels for government assistance. The crucial political alliance of the middle class with the disadvantaged might be at hand. An additional challenge will be to fashion appeals to the elderly for helping disadvantaged youth, because the percentage of elderly in the total population will continue to grow in the next decade.

But a dark cloud over any promising trends is the federal budget deficit that greatly constrains national expenditures for the foreseeable future. Just as any public opinion polls reveal an increased public willingness to pay for children's programs, the capacity at the federal level has been emasculated. Moreover, state governments are facing increased expenditures for school enrollment growth and prisons. Some programs like health insurance might be transferred to employer financing. But many disadvantaged children need a number of public



services including health, education, nutrition, counseling, and child care. The overall condition of these children must be improved and reinforced by committed parents. This implies large sums of money that do not seem likely at the federal level or in many states confronted by low commodity prices and slow growth.

Consequently, the current fashion is to talk about "leverage" and "partnership" interventions. Education leverage programs with relatively low cost include better teacher recruitment, teacher in-service training, test development, and curriculum revision. Partnerships could encompass not only public agencies with business, but also with private children's providers like Boys' Clubs, the YWCA, and churches. But expanding Head Start beyond the 17 percent of children it covers now to all eligible children could cost $4 billion. Expanding comprehensive child care approaches like Head Start to the middle class could cost as much as $75 billion. Moreover, it is difficult to measure the outcomes from increased children's services because agencies like children's protective agencies do not keep outcome statistics.

In view of these fiscal constraints, it is necessary to revamp the current inefficient and often ineffective delivery system for children. Even if we had billions in new tax dollars, it would be unwise to spend it on increments in the present delivery system. We now turn to the array of problems with children's services.

Problems of Providing Services for Children with Multiple Needs

The condition of the services currently delivered to children and youth is plagued by three broad problems—underservice, low priority for prevention of problems, and service fragmentation. These problems amplify the issues and challenges confronting children outlined above, issues which have important implications for schooling. In short, given these societal changes, business as usual in children's services is not good enough, and will contribute to even greater long-term problems. This paper focuses on the latter two issues of prevention and fragmentation. The lack of adequate income, health, and jobs must be remedied as a part of the overall solution.

Service Fragmentation

> Consider the San Francisco family of six foster children headed by a severely disabled 67-year-old woman. The family lives in public housing, receives financial assistance, and obtains services from multiple agencies. The broad array and diversity of the agencies is reflected as follows. The Department of Social Services (DSS) is involved with the foster children; the woman has a DSS worker from the Adults Division. San Francisco General Hospital Family Health Center is the health care provider of the woman and many of the children. Staff of the Visiting Nurses Association of San Francisco make regular visits to the patient and a public health nurse visits the 14-year old teen mother. The Teenage Pregnancy Parenting Program (TAPP) and the Unified School District provide special services to this teen. The San Francisco General Hospital Early Parenting Program also provides services to the mother. Some of the older children who have drug problems have been involved with the police and have received drug rehabilitation program services. There have been reports that the younger foster children are having school problems, and one of the foster children has been recently placed in a special education program. All of the foster children have either Big Brothers or Big Sisters.[35]

The lawyers, psychiatrists, physicians, and mental health and education professionals, each from their own perspective and within the context of their particular involvement, try to develop support strategies and services. In California over 160 programs residing in 35 agencies and seven departments exist to serve children and youth, an array that is certainly not unique to this state. The tally does not include the many private organizations that also provide important assistance. Existing fragmentation is a monument to the single-issue policies and single-issue solutions that dominate social policy in America. Historically, children's policy has proceeded *ad hoc* as problems are "discovered," leading to a patchwork of solutions with little consideration of the existing policy configuration. Policies and programs for children are driven largely by political definitions of the problem and administrative definitions of the solution—specific responses to specific problems—rather than a consideration of the aggregate policy environment.

Lost in this fragmented intervention is an opportunity for professionals providing children's services to observe or acknowledge the cumulative impact of their activities on the lives of children and their families. With compartmentalization, children and families continue to fall between the cracks of various administrative definitions of "the problem," bringing costly redundancy at a time of general underservice. This can lead to an absolute loss of resources and support for children who need it most. The isolation of services has particular consequences for schools, the institution which has the most sustained contact with children

and their families. While the manifestations of fragmentation and underservice often are most evident as problems in school, the majority of schools do not have, for example, family counselors or health facilities. Furthermore, they lack much information about or contact with other services that could help address these needs.

Consequences of Fragmentation

In addition to under- or nonservice, fragmentation has a number of consequences on the conditions of children who are served, and may be especially acute for children with multiple needs.

Isolation of problems and labeling. Public responses typically focus on individual pathologies; task forces investigate problems like suicide, latch key children, substance abuse, or other disturbing conditions. Though important, the method of isolating particular problems for investigation or response leads to a fundamental loss of vision on the often close linkage *between* these various problems for any particular individual. Too often youth with multiple problems receive a programmatic label (substance abuser, delinquent, drop-out, teen parent) that misrepresents or oversimplifies the nature of the trouble and obstructs comprehensive assessment or response. No existing mechanisms trigger comprehensive planning or integrated case management particularly important for children and youth with multiple needs.

Discontinuity of Care. When children and youth move from one level of care to another (e.g., from home to detention in juvenile hall, from inpatient psychiatric hospitalization to residential treatment, or from dependency to emancipation), they move in and out of different departmental jurisdictions, encountering different groups of service providers who do not follow them to the next level of care. If service systems were better integrated, high-risk families, children, and youth would be part of a system of care that responded to their needs knowledgeably and consistently regardless of their place in the service continuum.

Conflicting goals. Conflicting concepts of purpose or treatment philosophy generate dissension and attenuate service. While the debate in part reflects differences between liberal and conservative political factions, it also reflects important differences in notions of service and standards of effective service or quality. For example, in California there is a long-standing debate in the area of child care services as custodial; the latter conceives of child care as a developmental program. This elemental lack of agreement on general purpose has generated incapacitating suspicion and lack of cooperation between agencies at both state and local levels. Within the juvenile justice system an unresolved disagreement exists between those who believe programs should continue a dominant focus on rehabilitation, and others who believe in deterrence through punishment. Few services see children as more than a temporary "recipient" with documented needs to be filled. In all children and youth sectors, there is a crucial imbalance favoring acute care over preventative or developmental services. This *de facto* definition of the "problem" as short-term and compartmentalized is compounded by the absence of any system of longitudinal record keeping or assessment.

Inability to bring existing resources to bear on problems. Lack of communication among service providers also frustrates service provision. School staff are often unaware of services available through juvenile justice, social service, or mental health agencies. Further-

more, one cannot expect actors at the base of the children's services to have developed broad networks for sharing information when no one at the top of the system knows the extent of services available for children. In California, for example, counties and school districts are the major provider of children's services but no data are available concerning total expenditures for children in counties. A major study was needed just to compile and analyze children's programs and budgets in one county.[36]

Disempowered youth. Partly as a result of fragmentation and partly as a result of an embedded paternalistic approach towards children and youth, these populations have not been asked to participate in the dialogue of identifying problems and possible alternative solutions. By segmenting out the different manifestations into isolated agencies it becomes difficult for the individual to coordinate what he or she wants or needs.

"Who is there for the children?" This question cannot be answered if no one is looking at all the elements of children's lives and considering how they fit together. It is the whole environment that creates the conditions for an adult life of satisfaction and productivity. Few teachers, physicians, workers in the juvenile court system, social workers, or others focus on the interactive or interdependent nature of their contribution to the experience of youth. Instead they look only at their own performance as members of particular agencies. Research has barely begun to develop a broader frame of reference that could answer these questions or illuminate the aggregate effects of the totality of children's policies on youth and their families. California, for example, simply collects no data on how the recipients or targets of the state's Byzantine children's services experience the system.

Rethinking Children's Services: Short- and Long-term

As we have seen, the consequences of a system of children's services that are defined by administrative boundaries and conceptions of "turf" are more than simply exasperating or inefficient. The system, many professionals and analysts agree, is beyond fixing with a bit of this improvement and some of that innovation. It is in need of fundamental rethinking. This is not a new conclusion. Neither is the prescription of "more integration," "more coordination," and "more collaboration."[37]

Yet most analyses stop with this plea. The problems of doing other than continuing current arrangements are admittedly formidable. An institutional structure of children's services that is built upon political compromise, time-honored professional terrain, and existing administrative arrangements intimidates efforts at reform. Such a structure comprises fundamental obstacles to seriously considering a different model of children's service. The usual prescription encourages an earnest nod at the need for "more integration" or "new approaches," but quietly counsels a return to existing practices for reasons of political, bureaucratic, and fiscal feasibility. Schools are a major cause of this fragmentation since they have been independent from the governing authority of county, city, and other children's agencies, and have their own property tax base. What are some of the obstacles towards coordination?

Few earmarked resources for coordination. The monetary incentives for agencies or institutions to do other than move along in single-track service are nonexistent to negative. Few resources are designated by policy makers to encourage cooperation among agencies or agents. When efforts to integrate or coordinate do occur, they generally come "above and beyond" the already crowded scope of children's service professionals' responsibilities.

Finding mutuality. The California Conditions of Children report provides numerous examples of debates among service providers about who would get the money following the child if services were shared? Whose treatment would dominate? Who would get to decide about the standards, scope, and nature of programs or services for children in a joint-agency setting? How would instances of misaligned incentives be resolved?

One need only look at programs authorized by different levels of government to see the difficulties of coordination and cooperation. For instance, these problems have arisen over efforts to merge federal and state eligibility requirements. Even more problematic from the perspective of the local service provider (and so from the perspective of the intended beneficiary) are the obstacles to effective service delivery created by programs that involve multiple agencies or centers of authority, even within the same service sector such as mental health or juvenile justice.

Training segregation. The isolation of professionals, agencies, and services is the inevitable result of a system that reifies and reinforces conceptions of discrete problem areas and bounded professional turf. The socialization and training of professionals begins at the university where traditional departmental structures stymie interprofessional or coordinated professional programs. Most people who work with children and youth sectors are trained in separate schools within the academy, such as schools of education, social work, public health and public administration. Nor do they find common ground once they begin practicing since professional meetings and conferences rarely overlap the fields. These professionals thus form separate networks for all of their careers. For example, the San Diego Superintendent of Schools had been in his job over five years before he met the major county-level administrators of children's services.

Promising Responses to Tackle the Concerns: The Short-term

However, even in the face of such imposing difficulties, a number of promising responses to the problems inherent in present arrangements are appearing in California and other communities around the country. Pushed by a sense of urgency and conviction, practitioners and policy makers in diverse arenas have moved to recast aspects of children's services both structurally and conceptually. While they fall short of addressing dysfunctions in the system and attempt more modest goals of making a particular domain of children's services work better, in the future they can provide valuable and real-life lessons about the problems and the potential benefit of cooperation and coordination. However, our intent here is not to evaluate these projects or describe them in fine detail but merely to point out efforts that move in the right direction.

Ventura and San Bernardino Counties. To deal with the discontinuities of a fragmented service system and isolated professional staff, Ventura and San Bernardino Counties

in California created coordinating mechanisms to integrate services to clients. Ventura County established an interagency network that includes cooperation at the highest administrative levels. The agency directors of Mental Health, Social Services, Corrections, and Special Education formally consented to share responsibility for the system. All services are based on written interagency agreements identifying the system. All services are based on written interagency agreements identifying the full range of problems that place a child at risk and the treatments they will implement. With a specific focus on high-risk children who are either potentially or actually living out of their natural homes, the Ventura program reportedly has been successful in blending services and personnel from agencies participating in the network into a comprehensive and continuing treatment for troubled youth. Services follow the child, thereby establishing new links with private sector providers.

The San Bernardino program is modeled after Ventura's efforts, but has its own distinctive features. All major youth-serving agencies in the county—juvenile justice, the schools, public health, community services, the district attorney, the sheriff, libraries, Head Start, probation and others participate in the Children's Policy Council. This council in turn is served by a Children's Advocate Council, which provides advice and "grass-roots" awareness of problems and community-based children's issues. Members include representatives from the PTA, United Way, Foster Parent Advisory Committee, Maternal, Child, and Adolescent Health Advisory Board, drug advisory board, ministerial representative, and the Native Americans group. A Children's Services Team provides the vehicle for on-going monitoring and evaluation of program services; a First Fund of Children's Resources seeks to form a partnership between the public, private-for-profit, and nonprofit sector to provide monetary and in-kind contributions, goods, and services.

In both Ventura and San Bernardino, planning for an integrated service model was facilitated by special funding from state sources, and influential members of the community—a juvenile court judge in both cases—pushed for change. Both efforts had high-level support from key agencies from the beginning, as well as a strong commitment of middle-level professional staff.

Minneapolis' Youth Coordinating Board. Minneapolis also has a structure to coordinate a range of youth services. Unlike the Ventura and San Bernardino efforts, which originated with and are sustained by youth service professionals, Minneapolis' Youth Coordinating Board (MYCB) is a creation of municipal government and the Mayor. Created through a joint powers agreement between the City of Minneapolis, the Minneapolis Public Schools, Hennepin County, the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board, and the Minneapolis Public Library Board, the 11-member MYCB defines its goals in terms of promoting the integration and quality of services for *all* of the community's young people, not just youth with special needs.

As in Ventura and San Bernardino, funds were made available for planning and operation of the coordinating body. Each of the five sponsoring governmental bodies contractually agreed to provide at least $100,000 per year for five years to support basic staffing and operating costs. The apparent success of the MYCB thus far is to a significant degree a consequence of the vigorous commitment of the Mayor to an integrated youth policy for the city and making its development a top municipal priority. Further, the strategy for getting started and mobilizing

broad community support for the effort was important to the MYCB's present level of operation. Plans and activities began with a well-regarded early childhood family education program that did not, in the words of the executive director, "isolate the poor or particular neighborhoods" but served all children from 0-5 years with home visits, child advocates, and other services. MYCB has created its own local property tax base that can provide revenue for continuing its integrated services plan.

The Ounce of Prevention Fund. The Ounce of Prevention Fund in Illinois, created in 1982 as a partnership between the state child welfare agency and a private, philanthropic institution, serves as a broker and coordinator of services in a number of communities throughout the state. The Ounce of Prevention Fund supports a statewide system of service, research, training, and technical assistance focused on community-based programs for preteens, teen parents, and their families. Launched with matching grants of $400,000 each from the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services and the Pittway Corporation Charitable Foundation, other funders include an array of state agencies and private foundations as well as the National Center for Child Abuse and Neglect and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The Fund appears to be an effective response to the regulatory tangles that impede interagency coordination because as a third party organization it has more flexibility to blend services and activities. Also, because it is dedicated to brokering services and leveraging community-based support from a variety of sources (e.g., churches, community action groups, corporations, the schools, and so on), it is able to enhance the resources available to the youth it serves. And, as a third-party intermediary, the Fund is free of suspicion of "special pleading," narrow institutional self-interest, or problem definitions, which are rooted in professionally prescribed domains.

While each of these efforts has pursued substantively different programmatic strategies, each also has self-consciously *reconceptualized* the purpose of children's services, moving from the traditional clinical and constricted notions that dominate most of practices to a developmentally based view that sees the needs of youth as evolutionary and continuing. These approaches place youth services in the broader context in which children live—family, school, neighborhood. For example, the Ounce of Prevention Fund seeks explicitly to shift services from traditional perspectives based on a model of individual pathology to services that are built on models of individual development. The MYCB also features developmental language. While it is difficult (and perhaps too early) to tell the extent to which these reconceptualizations of the "problem" signal more than superficial or rhetorical change in policy, they nonetheless are prominent in self-reports, in service guidelines, and in goal statements. Only systematic evaluations over several years could tell us whether these approaches have been successful in meeting their objectives. But merely locating many children's services in one place helps clients more easily use the system.

Goals for the System

To make integration work—to create a community of resources responsive to children's needs—children's services will have to be marked by comprehensiveness, competency, and diversity. It will do little good to talk of integrating services for children unless we integrate children as active participants into the community of services and resources. It is not integration if we simply move to integrate services that continue to talk *at* rather than *with*

children; or that continue to do *to* and *for* children rather than plan and work *with* them, and their identified areas of support.

Comprehensiveness comes in creating channels of communication, using the child as a prime transmitter of information. As we mentioned earlier, current practices send social workers to observe and to talk with adults as the first and primary sources of knowledge about how children are faring. Children themselves can be far more involved as conduits of information. To be sure, the rearrangements of institutions to facilitate an easy flow of information and a comparison of available resources must come with a reconceptualization of the role of the child. Forging a matrix where individuals from at least one part of the services system are in touch with children on an ongoing basis could facilitate exchanges which begin with the child. As it is, the majority of children's services respond to crises as they emerge and they do not know what has happened in other parts of children's lives or their interactions with other services agencies.

Relatedly, competency is the second feature that must mark long-term solutions. Here we mean creating institutions and institutional tasks that actively engage children in identifying and solving their own problems and that involve them in tasks, group-support systems, and long-term commitment. Adults in both schools and service agencies typically talk *at* children, labeling their problems and fixing solutions dictated by administrative fiat or "that's just how it's done" procedures. Children and youths rarely have a chance to enter into the problem identification dialogue or to consider and evaluate possible alternative solutions, weighing risks and benefits. Youth services personnel—as well as procedures and policies—offer and dictate a paternalistic approach and argue that the "mess of their lives" indicates that they have no such capabilities.

Diversity cuts two ways. At one level, we mean to imply a diverse but coordinated set of agents and organizations available to serve children and youth. At another level, diversity comes from the array of ethnic, linguistic, and socioeconomic groups who respond to these agents and organizations in different ways as a result of cultural values, behavioral norms, language habits, and available resources. Different families encourage or discourage their children to participate in the array of community resources beyond the primary family unit. For example, urban black families are more inclined to permit their children to find work and leisure resources beyond the family than are recently arrived Mexican families. Single-parent middle-class families who have chosen "voluntary poverty" are much more likely to enable their children to take advantage of an array of free public services than are single-parent households who did not choose poverty. Services must be aware of and sensitive to this diversity not only as a way of reaching out to those who may need assistance but also to respond with assistance in a meaningful way.

Getting from Here to Widespread Integration of Services for Youth

The political momentum for a new, more comprehensive policy for children and youth has unusual potential now, in part because of possible intergenenerational linkages. For instance, the concerns of the middle class about child care can be fused with the urgent child-care needs of disadvantaged groups. People are realizing that security in their older ages rests to some degree on the productive capacity of the young. Building a broader coalition for improvement

depends on public support, but another crucial element will be the successful enlistment of education, health, protective services, and other sectors' professionals and leaders, as well as among those across the public and private sectors. Their support is needed not only to give a momentum to changes that would bridge the various services, but to give them a chance for success.

We are skeptical of symbolic reorganization devices like a state department of children's services or a state children's code of law. Surface reorganizations fail to acknowledge that the problems we have analyzed are deeply rooted and cannot be solved by superficial changes in organizational structures. Our understanding of the ingredients to successfully initiate local service coordination suggests that flexible initiative money through foundations has been crucial in generating effective local child-resource policies. Other key characteristics are cooperation among mid-level bureaucrats, commitment from top executives, and adaptation to particular local contexts. Consequently, we believe that federal and state government should provide seed money and prescribe a local process for the reconceptualization and planning of integrated children's services.

The longer-range perspective requires support from research and evaluation that presently is missing. One of the chronic problems in attempts to develop complex understandings of the conditions of children's lives is the lack of adequate information about the aggregate effects of national, state, and local services on individuals and groups. Because children's needs are not neatly compartmentalized, and because a consequential part of the policy debate cuts across categories, labels, and professional domains, it is essential that research on children and children's youth resources also not be bound by existing institutional arrangements or authorization. Information specific to the state and local contexts is a prerequisite for any kind of policy analysis that will successfully lead to change. Policy makers realize that support from the public emerges when they perceive connections to specific local issues and problems.

It will also require that the high boundaries between professions be lowered, beginning with university training and extending through professional practice. Programs to prepare educational administrators should provide more interprofessional experiences and curriculum. Ohio State University has designed such programs, which help bring together nurses, doctors, lawyers, social workers, educators, and others. This early orientation to interprofessional preparation can help break down the barriers that are built into the delivery system and create integrated professional networks.

But most importantly, coordination of youth services must find an organizational and structural center. We suggest that the school would be one logical hub of integration. Other "hubs" are needed, but that discussion is beyond the scope of this paper. A discussion of the potential role of schools in this context follows.

The Role of Schooling

Schools provide the organizational context for the most sustained and ongoing contact with children outside the family setting. This element facilitates a relatively long-term understanding of the needs and concerns of youth, a perspective often missing from other services. Because

of everyday contact, the school can provide a setting for continuing exchanges with children that can better include them in the processes of identifying problems and possible solutions and can more quickly catch new needs as they arise. The developmental approach embedded in much of schooling activities could also provide a much-needed perspective to other services, which tend to respond to episodic and acute crises as they emerge. However, many adults and children have negative experiences at schools, so schools can only be one location for better services.

The historic separation of schooling from city or county government mitigates against coordination and the notion of the school as a center of activity for youth services. Since the early part of this century schools developed a separate board and tax base with few formal linkages to other units of local government. However, this separation did not protect schools from politics, as was intended, but rather created an alternative set of politics. It did succeed in encouraging only sporadic interaction with general government and often adversarial relationships with town/municipal governments.[38] We contend that this metropolitan political separation is dysfunctional with respect to meeting the multiple needs of many students. The political or informal linkages between most cities, counties, and schools are minimal and not oriented around the particular developmental needs of at risk children. Furthermore, separation has weakened a potential coalition for children since educators rarely coordinate political strategy with other service providers.

The results of a national study of school boards suggest that reformers were successful in separating education from mainstream politics:

> Local boards and their members have only sporadic interaction with general government and tend to be isolated from mainstream community political structures.
>
> There is very little systematic communication between school system governance and general government, despite the fact that increasing numbers of students have learning problems associated with non-school factors. These include poor housing, lack of family support and resources, and limited employment opportunities. In addition, when interaction between the school system and general government does exist, it often is only through the superintendent. Fiscally dependent boards which must interact with town/municipal government bodies frequently are mired in adversarial relationships.[39]

Under a new vision the school could become the site or broker of numerous services such as health clinics, after school child care, alcohol- and drug-abuse programs and organized recreation programs. More child care and preschool programs could be located on or near school grounds to provide a better transition with the regular school program. While the school should not financially underwrite these services, it could provide the facilities and welcome city, county, and private agencies to school grounds. Schools would need additional funds to help provide integrated case management of the student with multiple problems and would not be the only place where interagency collaboration might take place. The familiarity of a case manager with all matters of consequence currently affecting the family would improve assistance to parents and youth and help prevent problems before they emerge or become severe.

The effective case manager knows about the various public or private agencies that can help and attempt to orchestrate the fragmented service delivery systems. In successful examples, the case manager coached the individual in identifying his or her own problem and

own course of action. The case manager does not take over for the parents or tell them what to do, since that serves to reinforce the dependence of the family on outside authorities to solve their own problems. Schools need to create incentives for teachers and administrators to prevent major children's problems through effective collaboration with other agencies. Collaboration needs to penetrate the classroom and help kids have more academic success.

The school as the site of numerous children's services will require a rethinking of the role of the principal. If the principal were designated as chief administrator of the broader array of services for children, time for instructional and other schooling duties might be insufficient. This kind of change would also require drastic alterations in the current scope of principal preparation and programs for staff development. Another strategy would be to locate a children's services coordinator at the school who would be employed by county or city government. This option would relieve the school of stretching its current administrative obligations. The services coordinator would report to an interagency council of local children's services. In the California context, county government has the major nonschool responsibility for children with multiple needs and would hire the school site coordinator.

While there are many visions of the next wave of school reform, the school as the hub for comprehensive student services should become more prominent. The bottom third of the achievement band and students who are failing from numerous interrelated problems are not likely to be helped much by a strategy that focuses *solely* on raising academic standards or providing more teacher decision-making. Children's prospects have a good chance of improving only through a broader conception of childhood that includes coordination of review at child-care centers and family-support centers as well as schools.

State Approaches Toward Integration and Coordination of Children's Services

In recognition of the present fragmented and often ineffectual system of children's services, attempts have also been made at the state level to better integrate and coordinate service programs. These efforts include state commissions on children, legislative committees, children's budgets, interagency cooperation, legislative mandates, and task forces examining service delivery of programs for children and youth. The discussion that follows provides some examples of these state interventions which have had mixed success in improving service delivery.

State Commissions on Children

In recent years, several states have established commissions on children and youth in an effort to create organizationally a greater degree of coordination and integration of services across state agencies and departments responsible for children. At present, 33 states have in place a board, commission, council, institute, or office on children. These organizations vary considerably in institutional history, structure, authority, statutory power, and mandate.

Most state commissions were created after 1980, particularly during the period of 1983-86, in response to the governor's or legislature's interest in better coordinating children's services.

Coordination and integration activities at the state level are exercised by establishing formal channels of communication with agency directors responsible for delivering services to children. Regularly scheduled meetings with officials who would otherwise not speak to each other provide a conduit for establishing cooperative agreements and exploring alternative program arrangements. Commission directors report that issues of self-interest and distrust hinder support for commission efforts initially, but influence of Governor, interest in providing cost-effective, quality care, and credibility of commission (political and professional image) function to create an atmosphere of cooperation and commitment.

The recent growth in state commissions on children reflects a strong interest by legislators and governors to express both symbolically and substantively a concern for children and youth. Some states have structured their commissions to affect children's policy, planning, and administration. Other states have created a more modest research and advisory organization. In general, the state commissions have been established around three central goals:

(1) To create a process in which communication between departments with responsibility for children's services is established.

(2) To create awareness of children's needs and to communicate those needs to policy makers, advocates, and the general public.

(3) To collect data on the condition of children and the state systems that serve them.

The various structures reflect the political, geographical, and historical conditions of the individual states, and are tempered by the influence of various leaders in the legislature, administration, and bureaucracy. The idiosyncratic nature of this coordination mechanism, and the lack of systematic evaluations, make it difficult to judge the effectiveness of these models. Nevertheless, the interest in creating a state executive agency on children seems likely to continue unabated.

Legislative Committees

In recent years, an increasing number of state legislatures have created special committees specifically designed to address children and youth issues. Standing committees on children and youth are designed to reduce fragmentation by creating one legislative structure responsible for most, if not all, children and youth issues. Select or special committees are temporary panels assigned specific issues, such as day care, child abuse, or teen pregnancy. These short-term committees are typically nonlegislative, and serve as "study groups" to research a specific social issue, hold public hearings on that issue, develop reports, and make legislative and administrative recommendations. (Some state legislatures prefer to empanel task forces or advisory councils with both public and private members appointed to focus on a specific issue or problem.)

According to a 1987 survey by the National Conference of State Legislatures, there are currently 22 committees on children, youth, and families. The majority of these were formed during the last five legislative sessions. The type, life, and size of each state children and youth committee varies.

The growth of legislative or special committees on children and youth may reflect increased interest in and concern for improving policy for children on the part of state legislators. The creation of these committees certainly bestows a certain degree of legitimacy to issues surrounding children's lives, and can contribute to a more substantive, coherent dialogue among the child advocacy community and policy makers. Nevertheless, the relative power of these committees should be measured against the established authority and control of long-standing, traditional committees of power—Finance, Ways and Means, Human Services, and Education.

In many state legislatures, the committees on children and youth are chaired by newly elected, female legislators who have expressed a strong interest in children's policy. These members' activities, given their modest legislative experience and few political "friends," may be limited to receiving public testimony and conducting small studies on specific, narrow issues. Thus, rather than serve as a focal point for legislative action, these committees may distract from more sustained, well-formulated legislative efforts in children's policy.

Children's Budgets

Children's budgets reflect state efforts to extract from all state agencies and departments a detailed fiscal analysis of programs and services for children. By tracing funding streams and reorganizing department budgets, states such as New York (in 1980) have attempted to improve planning, budgeting, and coordination in the delivery of services for children. The idea, however, sometimes proves troublesome in execution. State legislatures have found it difficult to disentangle multiple, overlapping programs and systems in their effort to provide an accurate and comprehensive portrait of children's services.

Children's Codes

Some states have limited legislative remedies to a children's code—which establishes a bill of rights for children in terms of a standard of care and range of services. Children's codes often reflect the state's interest in establishing a criminal code unique to children and youth and in reorganizing the juvenile justice system. More often, however, efforts to codify the rights of children and the state's obligations in responding to children's needs reflect symbolic, rather than substantive responses. A number of state legislatures are currently considering a children's code or children's act to legislatively reorganize programs and services.

Traditional Approaches

Despite the flurry of programmatic initiatives and organizational births during this decade, most states continue to organize and deliver children's services through the traditional executive agency arrangement. At both state and local levels of government, the bureaucratic structure persists in an array of eligibility requirements, procedures, standards, categories, assessment tools, and treatment protocols. Perhaps in response to entrenched interests, and in the absence of other viable alternatives or broader conceptions of children's policy, several states and localities (including California) have adopted various approaches aimed at improving communication processes, coordination, and integration of services within these existing bureau-

cratic arrangements. These approaches include interagency agreements, legislative mandates, and task forces.

Interagency Cooperation

Interagency agreements are made among relevant executive agencies responsible for delivery of services to children and youth. These agreements may be entered into voluntarily by departments or mandated by the legislature, and may apply to local entities as well as state agencies. Two principal types of interagency agreements exist to coordinate children's services: those accompanying financial contracts and those that do not involve transfers of funds but designate individual agency responsibilities in areas of coordinated activity. In California, the Departments of Social Services and Education engage in financial interagency agreements regarding child-care funds under the Social Services block grant. In addition, the California Senate and Assembly recently passed legislation creating an Interagency Children's Services Coordinating Board, comprised of the directors of state agencies that provide services to children and youth. The Board would review, on an ongoing basis, state children's policies and enhance coordination of services without additional state funds. The bill currently is awaiting the Governor's signature. Additional nonfinancial agreements are typically used to comply with mandates contained in federal and state law. The federal Education for All Handicapped Children Act requires that state departments of education establish agreements with other agencies providing services to handicapped children. Agreements mandated by state legislatures are considered more binding than internal ones, and usually carry with them more effective enforcement mechanisms.

Legislative Mandates

In 1984, landmark legislation introduced by California Assembly Speaker Willie Brown clarified the legal responsibility for the provision of medically related services to handicapped children. Essentially, the legislation mandated interagency cooperation between mental health agencies and special education staff which had previously been ignored, despite departmental interagency agreements. Before the Brown legislation, bureaucratic chaos had resulted in local school districts assuming the fiscal and service responsibility for medically related services—tasks which the districts were ill-equipped to perform.

Another significant bill enacted in California during 1984-85 focused on the need to improve the coordination between the several state agencies providing services to handicapped and high-risk infants. California Assemblyman Louis Papan argued successfully that AB 114 was necessary to eliminate:

(1) confusion regarding conflicting mandates and eligibility criteria from department to department;

(2) delays families were experiencing in attempting to locate services among several agencies; and

(3) duplication of administrative and assessment procedures.

Notably, more sweeping recommendations to create local advisory councils and an interagency state commission were dropped after the California Department of Developmental Services and the Health and Welfare Agency voiced their opposition to additional governmental structures. A move to create a lead state agency failed due to advocacy and provider group reluctance to vest their interests in an agency other than the one with which they enjoyed access and support. In the end, an existing task force assumed the responsibility to continue coordination activities.

Task Forces

Many states have empaneled task forces to review current policies and to make recommendations on specific children's issues, such as child care or child abuse. Often bipartisan and structured to include agency personnel, legislators, and private-interest groups, task forces vary widely in the perceived level of leadership, legitimacy, and status. Consequently, some task force reports are instrumental in affecting change, while others are merely organizational artifacts of purely symbolic political gestures.

Summary

State actions, including reorganization, consolidated budgets, and code revision, display limited success and impact upon prevention or fragmentation. A more promising approach would be incentive grants for local initiatives and selective state deregulation when localities demonstrate effective services integration plans.

Concluding Comments

Several themes emerge from the prior analysis. First, the condition of children in the U.S. is diverging, with a majority of our children healthier, wealthier, and better educated than at any time in U.S. history. However, there is a growing minority of children (about 20 to 25 percent) whose condition places them at risk. Poverty among children has doubled in the last 30 years and there are alarming increases in areas like drug-abuse babies and foster care. More children have multiple problems and public awareness of these problems is growing. For example, in California child-abuse reports grew from 19,000 in 1979 to 61,000 in 1988.

The plight of our children has not escaped political notice and several trends are converging to provide more public support. The recently passed federal child care act is a dramatic example, and includes coalitions between middle-class and lower-class children. However, this positive political momentum is constricted by federal budget deficits and slower state revenue growth.

There are several reasons for improving the overall system for children's services. Limited funds means that greater efficiency is necessary, but the prime reason is that the existing system is not working, particularly for the child with multiple needs. The current system is inadequate for prevention, hopelessly fragmented, and unaccountable for results. We propose several approaches to improve the system at both the local and state levels. The removal of

the Education Department from HEW has exacerbated the problems at the federal level. The federal government can help remedy the current situation by providing incentive grants to states and localities who revamp their children's policy and deliver systems along the lines suggested above. These state and local systems include numerous public and private providers and the solution transcends the traditional public sector agencies.

Only a coalition of public and private groups can meet the challenge. Funding must come from all levels of government and be combined with the private sector. A national consensus among various leadership groups appears to favor intensive early childhood intervention for disadvantaged children. But there is no consensus on a second wave of education reform, as concepts like restructuring or professionalism fail to generate political momentum. Perhaps what is needed is a paradigm shift to children's policy that transcends individual delivery systems. Many disadvantaged children have multiple needs that cannot be met by any single public or private institution. Although numerous approaches to better coordination have been attempted, traditional approaches appear to produce only incremental change to the system. Only by a comprehensive approach that follows the life course of a child can we make a big difference.

Notes

1. We refer here in general to the ages 0 to 18. For the sake of linguistic convenience, we will often use the term children or youth, but we mean to refer to the entire cluster of legal juveniles.
2. We mean by this term any primary caregiver, who may or may not be biologically related to the child.
3. The extent to which poverty itself or other characteristics within the context of the environment account for the problems is not clear, although poverty does have a direct impact on goods and services that affect the quality of children's lives.
4. Defined here in terms of money income. Although some studies include other types of income, such as public welfare monies, children in poverty still tend to fare worse on a variety of measures than their peers.
5. M. Hill and G. J. Duncan, "Parental Family Income and the Socioeconomic Attainment of Children," *Social Science Review* 16 (1987): 39.
6. From Current Population Survey Profile, 1986. California State Census Data Center, cited in "The Economic Status of Children," by M. Wald, J. Evans, and M. Ventresca in *The Conditions of Children in California,* edited by Michael Kirst (Berkeley: PACE, 1989), p. 53.
7. In 1986 dollars.
8. Current Population Survey, in Wald, Evans, and Ventresca, op. cit., p. 54.
9. Current Population Survey, in Wald, Evans, and Ventresca, op. cit., p. 54.
10. Maine Department of Human Services, *Children's Deaths in Maine, 1976-80 Final Report* (1983), cited in M. Wald, J. Evans, and M. Ventresca, op. cit., p. 59.
11. L. Egbuonu and B. Starfield, "Child Health and Social Status," *Pediatrics* 69 (1982): 550.
12. A. Hahn, J. Danzberger, and J. Lefkowitz, *Dropouts in America* (1987).
13. J. Flanningan and W. Cooley, *Project Talent: One Year Follow-up Studies* (1986).
14. Wald, Evans, and Ventresca, op. cit.
15. From Current Population Survey; Child Trends, Inc.
16. A condition that results not from an increase in birthrates to single women, but because of a growth in the number of women in the U.S. population.
17. L. Bumpass, "Children and Marital Disruption: A Replication and Update," *Demography* 21 (1984): 71.
18. Only 60 to 65 percent of all children presently live with both biological parents.

19. U.S. Department of Education, *Youth Indicators* (1988), cited in "Children's Family Life" by M. Wald, J. Evans, C. Smrekar, and M. Ventresca in *The Conditions of Children in California,* edited by Michael Kirst (Berkeley: PACE, 1989), p. 33.

20. *The Forgotten Half: Pathways to Success for America's Youth and Young Families,* Final Report for the William T. Grant Foundation Commission on Work, Family, and Citizenship, November 1988, p. 38..

21. See "Children's Family Life" by Wald, Evans, Smrekar, and Ventresca, op. cit., pp. 42-44.

22. *Youth Indicators* (1988) cited in *The Forgotten Half,* op. cit., p. 41.

23. *The State of Families,* 1. Milwaukee, WI: Family Service of America (1984), p. 62. Cited in *The Forgotten Half,* op. cit., p. 41.

24. *The Forgotten Half,* op. cit., p. 45.

25. *The Forgotten Half,* op. cit., p. 45.

26. Neal Halfon and Wendy Jameson, Claire Brindix, Carol Korenbrot, Paul Newachek, Robert Isman, Philip Lee, and Jacquelyn McCroskey, "Health" in *The Conditions of Children in California* edited by Michael Kirst (Berkeley: PACE, 1989)., pp. 143-203.

27. Neal Halfon. Integrated Services Testimony to the Senate Select Committee on Children and Youth, December 7, 1988.

28. Norton Grubb and Marvin Lazerson, *Broken Promises: How Americans Fail their Children* (New York: Basic Books, 1982).

29. Ibid., p. 51.

30. Ibid.

31. Steven Gold, "The Cost of Fixing Up the Schools," *State Legislatures,* May 1988, pp. 18-20.

32. Grubb and Lazerson, op. cit., p. 61.

33. *Washington Post,* National Weekly Edition, July 4-12, 1988, p. 9.

34. *San Jose Mercury News,* October 6, 1989, p. 1.

35. Provided by Dr. Laura Grandin, Project Director, County of San Francisco Children, Youth and Family Services Feasibility Study, 1988.

36. Paul Goren and Michael Kirst, "An Exploration of County Expenditures and Revenues for Children's Services," Policy Analysis for California Education, Feb. 1989.

37. See Lisbeth Shorr, *Within Our Reach* (New York: Basic Books, 1989).

38. Lila N. Carol, et al., *School Boards: Strengthening Grass Roots Leadership* (Washington, D.C.: Institute for Educational Leadership, 1986).

39. Lila N. Carol, op. cit., p. 11.

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